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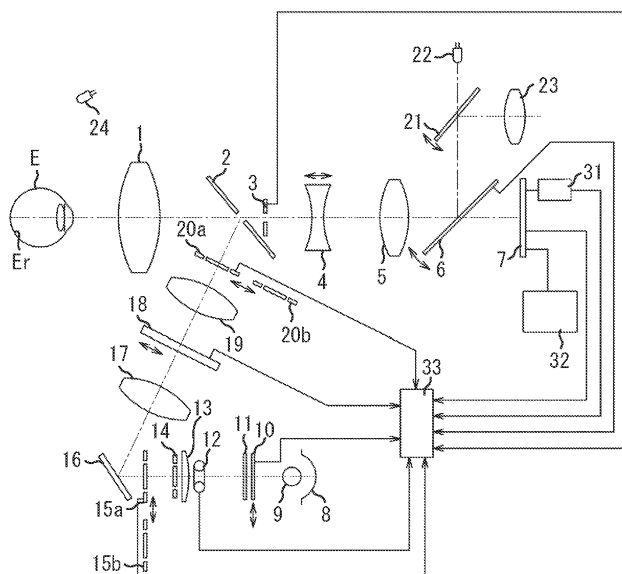
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(54) **Fundus camera**

(57) A fundus camera includes an optical path splitting unit arranged between a focusing unit and an imaging unit. The optical path splitting unit has characteristics adapted to reflect light of a visible light region and to transmit near-infrared light. The optical path splitting unit retreats from an optical path when a still fundus image is photographed. A quick-return mirror having such characteristics is used as the optical path splitting unit. When

near-infrared illumination light having a wavelength of about 850 nm is used, such light can be incident upon the imaging unit without loss of the amount of light. In addition, visible light output from an internal fixation target is projected onto a subject's eye. Further, a cornea diaphragm and a crystalline lens diaphragm are used for observing a fundus with invisible light. Each of the cornea diaphragm and the crystalline lens diaphragm can be changed to another one having a different diameter.

FIG. 1



Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to a fundus camera for observing a fundus of a subject's eye with near-infrared light or visible light.

Description of the Related Art

[0002] Fundus cameras for observing and photographing a subject's eye fundus are roughly classified into a mydriatic type fundus camera to be used by applying a mydriatic to a subject's eye, and a non-mydriatic type fundus camera to be used without applying a mydriatic to a subject's eye. The former type fundus camera is used mainly by ophthalmologists. Usually, when a subject's eye fundus is photographed using the former type fundus camera, a plurality of images of the fundus is taken not only by a color photographing technique but also by various techniques, such as a fluorescent photographing technique and a special filter photographing technique. The latter type fundus camera is used mainly by doctors or other physicians for medical check-ups. When a subject's eye fundus is photographed using the latter type fundus camera, single shot photographing is mainly performed.

[0003] However, in recent years, the need for non-mydriatic photographing has grown among ophthalmologists, because the application of a mydriatic to a subject's eye can be omitted. Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 9-66030 discusses a dual-use type fundus camera developed to be able to be used for both mydriatic photographing and non-mydriatic photographing, which can photograph both a dilated eye and a non-dilated eye.

[0004] The dual-use type fundus camera is provided with an optical finder. In a case where this dual-use type fundus camera is used as a fundus camera of the mydriatic type, an operator observes a subject's eye fundus with visible light via the optical finder. On the other hand, in a case where the dual-use type fundus camera is used as a fundus camera of the non-mydriatic type, an operator observes a subject's eye fundus with near-infrared light. A mirror that folds light back to the optical finder is withdrawn from the optical path. Thus, reflected light from a fundus image is introduced to an imaging unit, such as a charge-coupled device (CCD), so that a fundus image is displayed on a monitor.

[0005] Further, the dual-use type fundus camera is configured such that when a subject's eye fundus is photographed, a mirror for splitting an optical path into an observing optical system and a photographing optical system is withdrawn from the optical path, and thus a fundus image is introduced to the imaging unit.

[0006] On the other hand, Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2003-135402 discusses a fundus

camera which is not of the dual-use type usable for both mydriatic photographing and non-mydriatic photographing but is of the non-mydriatic photographing type. However, this fundus camera is configured to perform both observing and photographing of a subject's eye fundus using a single imaging unit and has a unit for presenting an internal fixation target. An optical path from a subject's eye is split by an optical path splitting prism into an optical path to the imaging unit and another optical path to the internal fixation target. The optical path splitting prism has characteristics adapted to transmit a part of the light having a wavelength of light of the internal fixation target and to reflect light having the other wavelengths.

[0007] The dual-use type fundus camera usable for both mydriatic photographing and non-mydriatic photographing, which is discussed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 9-66030, requires two components, i.e., a moving-image imaging unit for observing a subject's eye fundus, and a still-image imaging unit for photographing the fundus. Accordingly, the dual-use type fundus camera discussed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 9-66030 has problems in that the configuration of the fundus camera is complex, and that the size of the fundus camera is large. In addition, when performing non-mydriatic photographing of a subject's eye fundus, the fundus camera needs an internal fixation target for guiding a line of sight of a subject's eye and for making the subject's eye fixate thereon. That is, the fundus camera requires another additional optical system therefor.

[0008] The fundus camera discussed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2003-135402 is configured to use a single imaging unit for both observing and photographing a subject's eye fundus in order to miniaturize the body thereof. Thus, the fundus camera can project an internal fixation target onto a subject's eye. However, the fundus camera requires the optical path splitting prism for splitting the optical path from a subject's eye into an optical path to the imaging unit and another optical path to the internal fixation target. When photographing a subject's eye fundus with visible light, the optical path splitting prism transmits light of wavelengths within a range corresponding to the wavelength of light of the internal fixation target, among the wavelengths of reflected light from the fundus. Thus, not all light reflected from the fundus can be incident on the imaging unit. Consequently, a loss of the amount of light occurs. In addition, no optical finder is provided in the fundus camera. Accordingly, a subject's eye fundus cannot be observed by direct vision.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] The present invention is directed to a fundus camera configured to use a single imaging unit for both observing and photographing a subject's eye fundus, and to be capable of reducing, when photographing the fundus, loss of the amount of light reflected from the fundus,

and efficiently indicating an internal fixation target.

[0010] According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a fundus camera as specified in claims 1 to 11.

[0011] Further features and aspects of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of exemplary embodiments with reference to the attached drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The accompanying drawings illustrate exemplary embodiments, features, and aspects of the invention and, together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

[0013] Fig. 1 illustrates a configuration of a fundus camera of the dual-use type usable for both mydriatic photographing and non-mydriatic photographing according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

[0014] Fig. 2 is a graph illustrating a reflection characteristic of a quick-return mirror in the fundus camera according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

[0015] Fig. 3 illustrates an optical axis deviation due to the quick-return mirror in the fundus camera according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

[0016] Fig. 4 illustrates a shape of the quick-return mirror in the fundus camera according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

[0017] Fig. 5 is a graph illustrating sensitivity characteristics of an imaging unit in the fundus camera according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

[0018] Figs. 6A and 6B illustrate shapes of aperture masks.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

[0019] Various exemplary embodiments, features, and aspects of the invention will be described in detail below with reference to the drawings.

[0020] Fig. 1 illustrates a configuration of a fundus camera of the dual-use type usable for both mydriatic photographing and non-mydriatic photographing according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. In an observing/photographing optical system in front of a subject's eye E, an objective lens 1, a perforated mirror 2, a photographing diaphragm 3, a focusing lens 4, an imaging lens 5, a quick-return mirror 6, and an imaging unit 7 are sequentially arranged. The focusing lens 4 is a focusing unit for focusing the optical system on a fundus E_r of the subject's eye E. The quick-return mirror 6 is an optical path splitting unit constructed to be retractable from an optical path. The imaging unit 7 has sensitivity to both visible light and near-infrared light.

[0021] An illumination optical system serving as an illumination unit is provided on an incident optical path to the perforated mirror 2. In the illumination optical system, a visible light cut off filter 10, a diffusion plate 11, a Xenon

tube 12, a lens 13, a pupil stop 14, a crystalline lens diaphragm 15a, and a mirror 16 are sequentially arranged in the direction from a Halogen lamp 9 towards the perforated mirror 2. A reflecting mirror 8 is located behind the halogen lamp 9. In addition, a relay lens 17, a near-infrared cut off filter 18, a relay lens 19, and a cornea diaphragm 20a are sequentially arranged in the reflection direction of the mirror 16.

[0022] The Halogen lamp 9 is an observing illumination light source. The Xenon tube 12 is a photographing light source. The visible light cut off filter 10 cuts out light of a visible light region. The near-infrared cut off filter 18 cuts out light of a near-infrared light region. Both the visible light cut off filter 10 and the near-infrared cut off filter 18 can be inserted into and removed from the illumination optical path.

[0023] Further, each of the pupil stop 14, the crystalline lens diaphragm 15a, and the cornea diaphragm 20a has an annular opening portion. The crystalline lens diaphragm 15a can be changed to another crystalline lens diaphragm 15b differing in diameter therefrom. Similarly, the cornea diaphragm 20a can be changed to another cornea diaphragm 20a differing in diameter therefrom. When a fundus is observed with invisible light, the cornea diaphragm 20a and the crystalline lens diaphragm 15a are used. On the other hand, when the fundus is observed with visible light, the cornea diaphragm 20b and the crystalline lens diaphragm 15b are used. Observation of the fundus with invisible light and that of the fundus with visible light, which is performed by applying a mydriatic to a subject's eye E, differ from each other in required pupil diameter of the subject's eye E and in angle of view representing a range of a photographed fundus E_r thereof. Thus, such observation techniques can be optimized using the diaphragms 20a, 20b, 15a, and 15b differing in diameter from one another.

[0024] On the reflection optical path of the quick-return mirror 6, an oblique mirror 21, which can be inserted into and removed from the optical path, and an internal fixation target 22, which function as an internal fixation target indicating unit, are arranged. The internal fixation target 22 is placed at a position that is substantially conjugate with that of the fundus E_r of the subject's eye E. The wavelength of light of the internal fixation target 22 has a value for guiding the direction of a line of sight of the subject's eye E, e.g., 530 nm. On the reflection optical path of the oblique mirror 21, an optical finder 23 is arranged. Thus, the observing light source is constructed. Further, an external fixation target 24 for performing a fixation guiding operation for the subject's eye E is provided in the front vicinity of the subject's eye E.

[0025] A display position correcting unit 31 for correcting a position, and a monitor 32 for displaying a photographed fundus image are connected to the imaging unit 7. An output of the imaging unit 7 is connected to a control unit 33 for controlling the entire system. The photographing diaphragm 3, the quick-return mirror 6, the imaging unit 7, the visible light cut off filter 10, the Xenon tube 12,

the crystalline lens diaphragm 15a, the near-infrared cut filter 18, the cornea diaphragm 20a, and the display position correcting unit 31 are connected to the control unit 33.

[0026] Fig. 2 is a graph illustrating a reflection characteristic of the quick-return mirror 6. The quick-return mirror 6 has characteristics adapted to reflect light of a visible light region and to transmit light of a near-infrared light region. Accordingly, for example, when near-infrared illumination light having a wavelength of about 850 nm is used, such light can be incident upon the imaging unit 7 without causing loss of the amount of light. In addition, visible light irradiated from the internal fixation target 22 is projected onto the subject's eye E.

[0027] As is described below, in a non-mydratic mode for observing a fundus E_r with near-infrared light, the quick-return mirror 6 is inserted into the optical path. When the fundus E_r is photographed, the quick-return mirror 6 is withdrawn from the optical path. Consequently, as illustrated in Fig. 3, the position of an optical axis at observation of a fundus E_r deviates from that of the optical axis at photographing of the fundus E_r by a distance corresponding to the thickness t of the quick-return mirror 6. Thus, in the present embodiment, the thickness t of the quick-return mirror 6 is set to be 0.8 mm or less in order to reduce the amount of deviation of the optical axis. Consequently, influence of the deviation of the optical axis can be lessened.

[0028] In addition to the reduction in the thickness t of the quick-return mirror 6, for example, it is considered for reducing the amount of deviation of the optical axis that the quick-return mirror 6 is cross-sectionally wedge-shaped, as illustrated in Fig. 4, thereby mitigating the influence of the deviation of the optical axis.

[0029] Fig. 5 is a graph illustrating a sensitivity characteristic of the imaging unit 7. The imaging unit 7 has sensitivity to both visible light and near-infrared light. The imaging unit 7 has characteristics of being capable of outputting both a moving image and a still image.

[0030] An image including a moving image or a still image photographed by the imaging unit 7 is displayed on the monitor 32. In a case where a fundus is observed and photographed with near-infrared light, an image to be displayed on the monitor 32 is obtained by adding an aperture mask 41a, which is electronically generated for observing the fundus with near-infrared light, to a moving image or a still image of the fundus by the imaging unit 7, as illustrated in Fig. 6A. Then, the obtained image is displayed on the monitor 32, which can be observed with visible light via the optical finder 23. In a case where a still image of the fundus is observed and photographed with visible light, an image to be displayed on the monitor 32 is obtained by adding an aperture mask 41b, which is electronically generated for observing the fundus with visible light, to a still image of the fundus by the imaging unit 7, as illustrated in Fig. 6B.

[0031] The shape of the aperture mask varies with observation modes, i.e., a visible light observation mode

and a near-infrared light observation mode. This is because a photographing angle of view in the case of observing/photographing a fundus with visible light is larger than that in the case of observing/photographing a fundus with near-infrared light. Thus, the diameter of the aperture mask 41a for observing a fundus with near-infrared light is equal to a vertical dimension of the aperture mask 41b for observing a fundus with visible light. The horizontal dimension of the aperture mask 41b is larger than that of the aperture mask 41a.

[0032] In a case where a fundus E_r of a subject's eye E is observed and photographed in a non-mydratic mode, the illumination optical system uses light of a near-infrared wavelength as illumination light for observing the fundus. Thus, the visible light cut off filter 10 is inserted into the optical path of the illumination optical system to thereby cut off light of a visible light region. In addition, the cornea diaphragm 20a and the crystalline lens diaphragm 15a to be used for observing a fundus with invisible light are inserted into the optical path.

[0033] The control unit 33 withdraws the near-infrared cut off filter 18 from the optical path. In the observing/photographing optical system, the control unit 33 inserts the quick-return mirror 6 into the optical path. Further, the control unit 33 causes the internal fixation target 22 to turn on. In addition, the control unit 33 withdraws the oblique mirror 21 from the optical path. Furthermore, the control unit 33 drives the imaging unit 7 at low resolution while increasing a gain, i.e., an amplification factor, as compared with the time of photographing a still image of the fundus. The reasons for using such a setting is that the contrast of an image of the fundus observed with near-infrared observing light at the time of photographing a moving image of the fundus is low, that is the sensitivity of the imaging unit is low when using near-infrared observing light, as compared with using visible light, that is it is better to increase the gain even though a signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio is sacrificed, thus high resolution is unnecessary.

[0034] As described above, the aperture mask 41a for observing a fundus with near-infrared light is selected for a photographed reflection image of a fundus. An operator can move the internal fixation target 22 while observing a moving image output from the imaging unit 7 on the monitor 32. Thus, the operator guides a line of sight of a subject's eye E to a desired position. Then, focusing is performed by moving the focusing lens 4 while alignment is performed. Thus, a still image of the fundus is photographed by pushing a photographing switch (not shown).

[0035] When a still image of a fundus is photographed, a sufficient amount of light for photographing the fundus can be obtained using flash light of the Xenon tube 12. In addition, high resolution is needed because a photographed still image of the fundus is used for diagnosis. Accordingly, when a still image of a fundus is photographed, the control unit 33 performs a control operation to restore the gain and the resolution of the imaging unit 7.

[0036] In order to generate visible photographing light,

the control unit 33 inserts the near-infrared cut off filter 18 into the optical path and removes the visible light cut off filter 10 therefrom. Then, the control unit 33 causes the quick-return mirror 6 to be withdrawn from the optical path. Subsequently, the control unit 33 causes the Xenon tube 12 to emit light. Then, photographing of the fundus is performed. A photographed color image is displayed on the monitor 32.

[0037] In the mydriatic mode, in which a mydriatic is applied to the subject's eye for observation and photographing of the subject's eye fundus, the operator uses a lever (not shown) and inserts the oblique mirror 21 into the optical path. In order to generate visible observing light, the control unit 33 causes the visible light cut off filter 10 to be withdrawn from the optical path. Then, the control unit 33 inserts the near-infrared cut off filter 18 and the quick-return mirror 6 into the optical path. Further, the internal fixation target 22 is turned off. Furthermore, the control unit 33 changes the cornea diaphragm 20a and the crystalline diaphragm 15a to the cornea diaphragm 20b and the crystalline diaphragm 15b, respectively, and selects the aperture mask 41b.

[0038] Because the visible light cut off filter 10 is withdrawn from the optical path, the operator can observe the fundus E_r of the subject's eye E by direct vision via the optical finder 23 with visible light using the Halogen lamp 9. Further, the operator uses the external fixation target 24, which is placed outside the optical system, for performing a fixation guiding operation for the subject's eye E.

[0039] When the operator pushes the photographing switch, the control unit 33 sets the gain and the resolution of the imaging unit 7 at values for photographing a still image of a fundus. Then, the control unit 33 causes the quick-return mirror 6 to be withdrawn from the optical path. Further, the control unit 33 causes the Xenon tube 12 to emit light. Thus, photographing of the fundus is performed. A photographed color image is displayed on the monitor 32, similarly to the case where a fundus is observed with near-infrared light and is photographed with visible light.

[0040] Thus, the operator switches between a near-infrared light observation mode and a visible light observation mode by operating the oblique mirror 21. However, the operator can switch between the near-infrared light observation mode and the visible light observation mode by changing the visible light cut off filter 10. At that time, the control unit 33 inserts or removes the oblique mirror 21 into or from the optical path. Alternatively, the oblique mirror 21 can be constructed not to totally reflect light of the internal fixation target 22, but to have a light flux distributing function of distributing and transmitting a part of light having the wavelength of light of the internal fixation target 22. Consequently, the insertion/removal of the oblique mirror 21 is unnecessary.

[0041] Further, data representing the amount of deviation between the position of an optical axis at observation of a fundus and that of the optical axis at photograph-

ing of the fundus, which has been described with reference to Fig. 3, can preliminarily be input to the display position correcting unit 31. Thus, when a photographed image is displayed on the monitor 32, the control unit 33 can perform a control operation of displaying the photographed image at a position offset based on the amount of deviation. Consequently, occurrence of the deviation between the position at which an observed moving image is displayed and the position at which a photographed still image is displayed can be prevented. Accordingly, needs for reducing the thickness t of the quick-return mirror 6 and for cross-sectionally shaping the quick-return mirror 6 like a wedge are eliminated.

[0042] Further, according to the present embodiment, the aperture masks 41a and 41b are electronically created. However, a substantial aperture mask can be provided by increasing the number of forming fundus images using, e.g., a relay lens in the observing/photographing system. Thus, the aperture mask can be changed mechanically. In accordance with the fundus camera according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, both the observation of a near-infrared moving image and the photographing of a visible light still image can be achieved using the imaging unit that has sensitivity to both light of a visible wavelength and light of a near-infrared wavelength. Consequently, the device can be miniaturized.

[0043] Further, the quick-return mirror having characteristics adapted to transmit near-infrared light and to reflect visible light is used as the optical path splitting unit for splitting an optical path from a subject's eye fundus into an optical path to the imaging unit and an optical path to the internal fixation target. Thus, when the fundus is observed with near-infrared light, the internal fixation target can efficiently be indicated to the subject's eye. In addition, when a still fundus image is photographed, the quick-return mirror is retreated from the optical path. Thus, loss of the amount of reflected light from the fundus is not caused by the optical path splitting unit.

[0044] While the present invention has been described with reference to exemplary embodiments, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the disclosed exemplary embodiments. The scope of the following claims is to be accorded the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all modifications, equivalent structures, and functions.

Claims

1. A fundus camera comprising:

illumination means including:

invisible light generating means (9, 10) configured to irradiate light of an invisible light region for observing a fundus of a subject's eye with invisible light;

- visible photographing light generating means (12) configured to irradiate light of a visible light region for photographing the fundus with visible light; and
a near-infrared cut off filter (18) configured to be insertable into an optical path during photographing of a still image of the fundus;
- focusing means (4) configured to adjust focus on the fundus based on a reflection image from the fundus illuminated by the illumination means;
- imaging means (7) configured to capture a fundus image formed from reflection light from the fundus, the imaging means (7) having sensitivity to both visible light and near-infrared light and being capable of outputting a moving image and a still image;
- optical path splitting means (6) located between the focusing means (4) and the imaging means (7), having characteristics of reflecting visible light and of transmitting near-infrared light, and configured to be retreatable from the optical path during photographing of a still image; and
internal fixation target indicating means (22) located at a position that is substantially conjugate with a position of the fundus on a reflection optical path of the optical path splitting means (6) and configured to guide a direction of a line of sight of the subject's eye.
2. A fundus camera according to claim 1, wherein the optical path splitting means (6) is cross-sectionally wedge-shaped.
 3. A fundus camera according to claim 1, wherein the optical path splitting means (6) includes a transparent plate having a thickness of 0.8 mm or less.
 4. A fundus camera according to any preceding claim, wherein the illumination means further includes visible observing light generating means (12) configured to irradiate visible light for observing the fundus with visible light, and
wherein the fundus camera further comprises an oblique mirror (21) located in the reflection optical path of the optical path splitting means (6), and an optical finder (23) located in a reflection optical path of the oblique mirror (21).
 5. A fundus camera according to claim 4, further comprising control means (33) configured to perform control operations of switching between the invisible light generating means (9, 10) and the visible observing light generating means (12) by inserting or removing the oblique mirror (21), of switching between diaphragms (15a, 15b) provided in the illumination means, and of changing a shape of an aperture mask (41a, 41b) to be added to the fundus image.
 6. A fundus camera according to claim 5, wherein the invisible light generating means and the visible observing light generating means comprise the same light source, and
wherein the fundus camera further comprises a visible light cut off filter (10) arranged for insertion into or removal from an optical path of the light source.
 7. A fundus camera according to claim 6, further comprising control means (33) configured to perform control operations of switching between the invisible light generating means and the visible observing light generating means by inserting or removing the visible light cut filter (10), of switching between diaphragms (15a, 15b) provided in the illumination means, and of changing a shape of an aperture mask (41a, 41b) to be added to the fundus image.
 8. A fundus camera according to claim 4, wherein the oblique mirror (21) has a light flux distributing function of distributing light fluxes in a visible light region.
 9. A fundus camera according to claim 1, wherein the imaging means (7) is driven at a high gain during observation of the fundus using the invisible light generating means (9, 10), as compared with during photographing of the fundus with visible light.
 10. A fundus camera according to claim 1, wherein the imaging means is driven at a low gain during observation of the fundus using the invisible light generating means (9, 10), as compared with during photographing of the fundus with visible light.
 11. A fundus camera according to claim 5, further comprising display position correcting means (31) configured to acquire an amount of positional deviation between a moving image and a still image formed on the imaging means (7),
wherein the control means (33) performs, based on the amount of positional deviation acquired by the display position correcting means, a control operation of displaying a photographed still image at the same position on display means (32) as that at which a photographed moving image is displayed.

FIG. 1

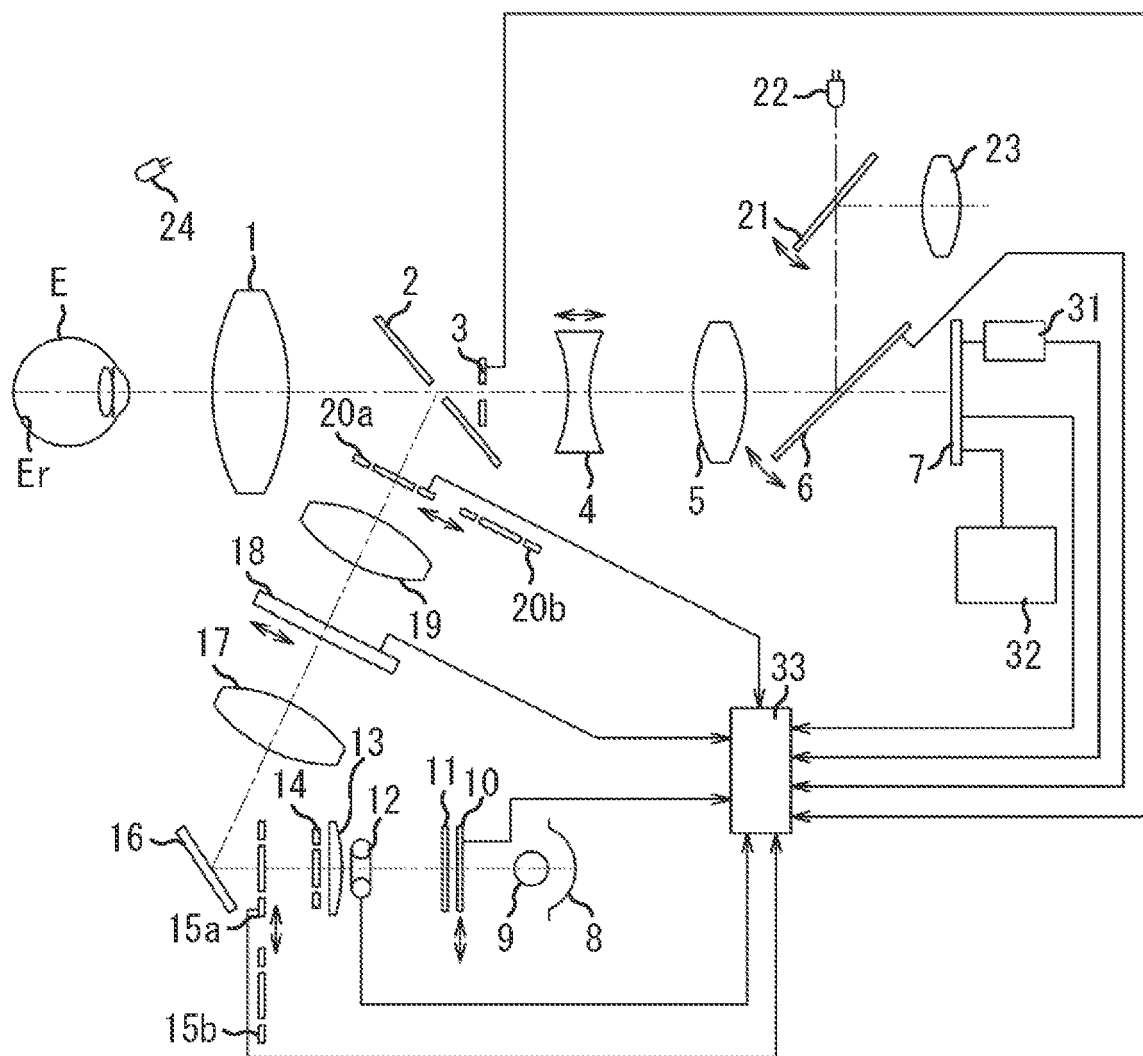


FIG. 2

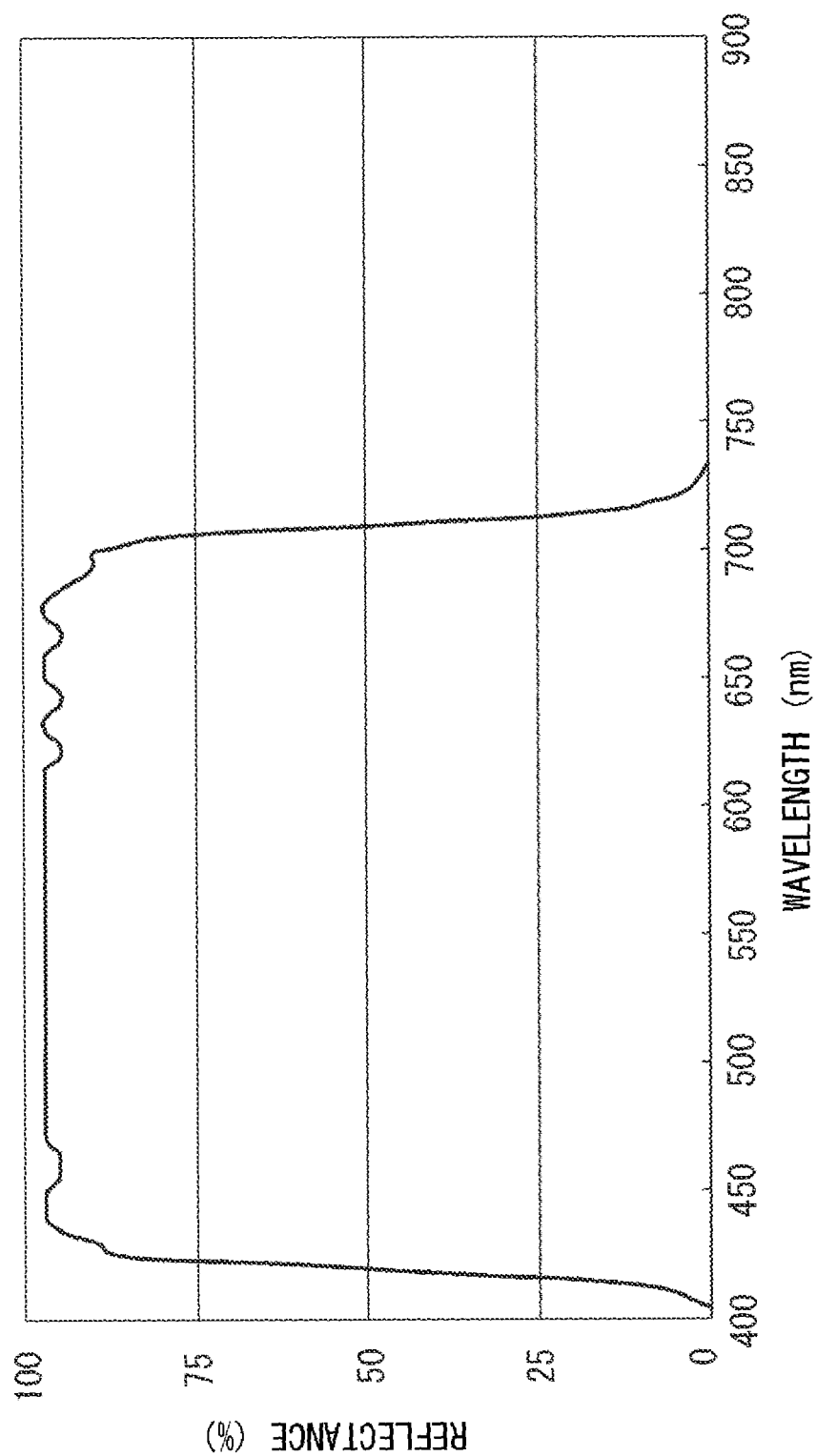


FIG. 3

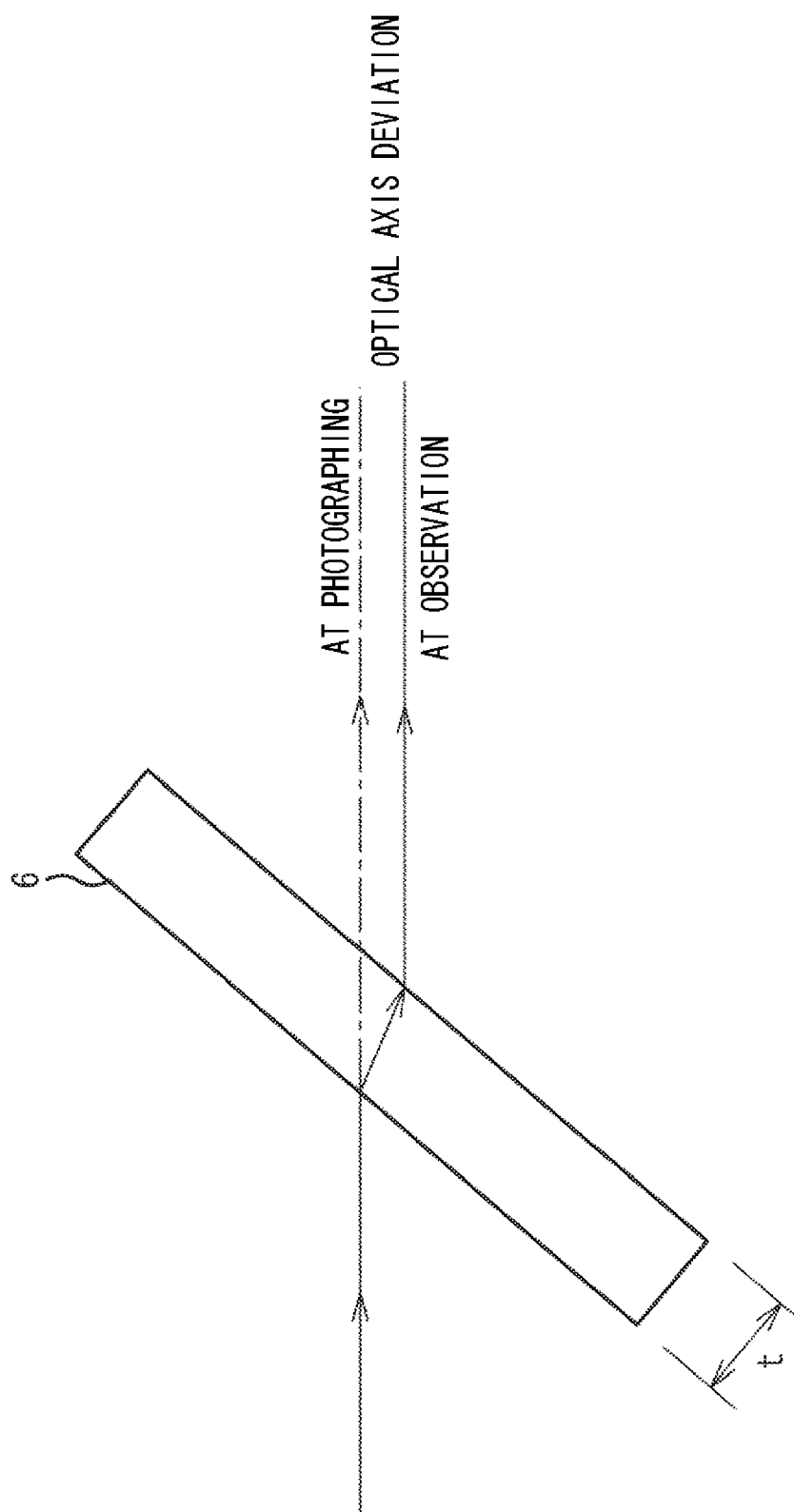


FIG. 4

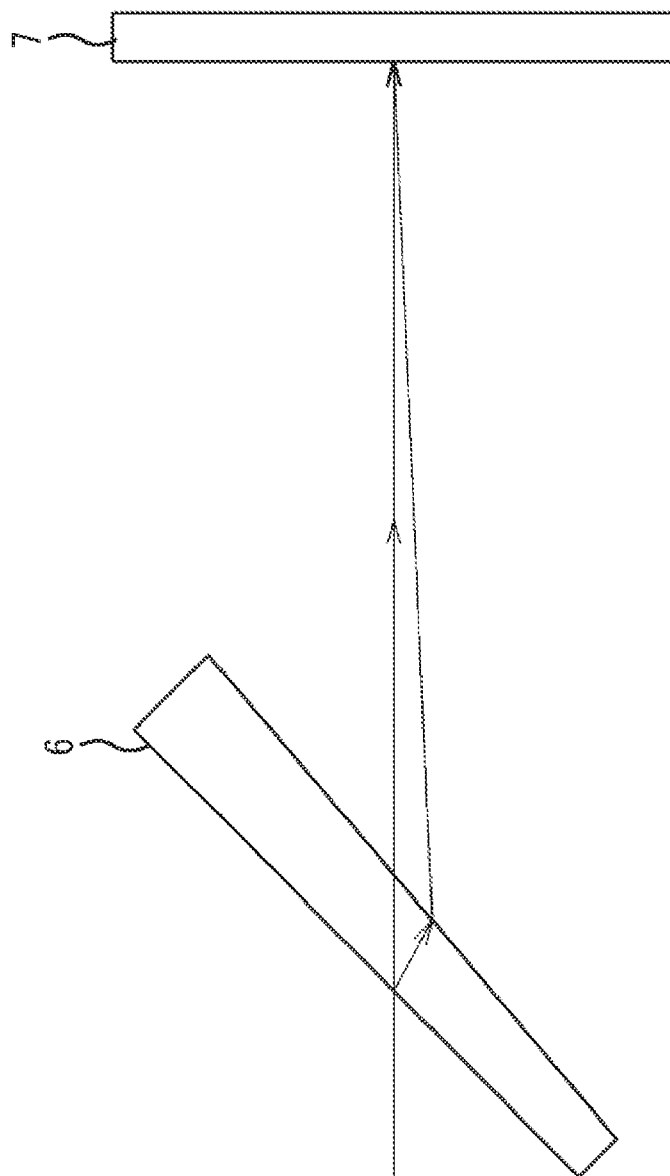


FIG. 5

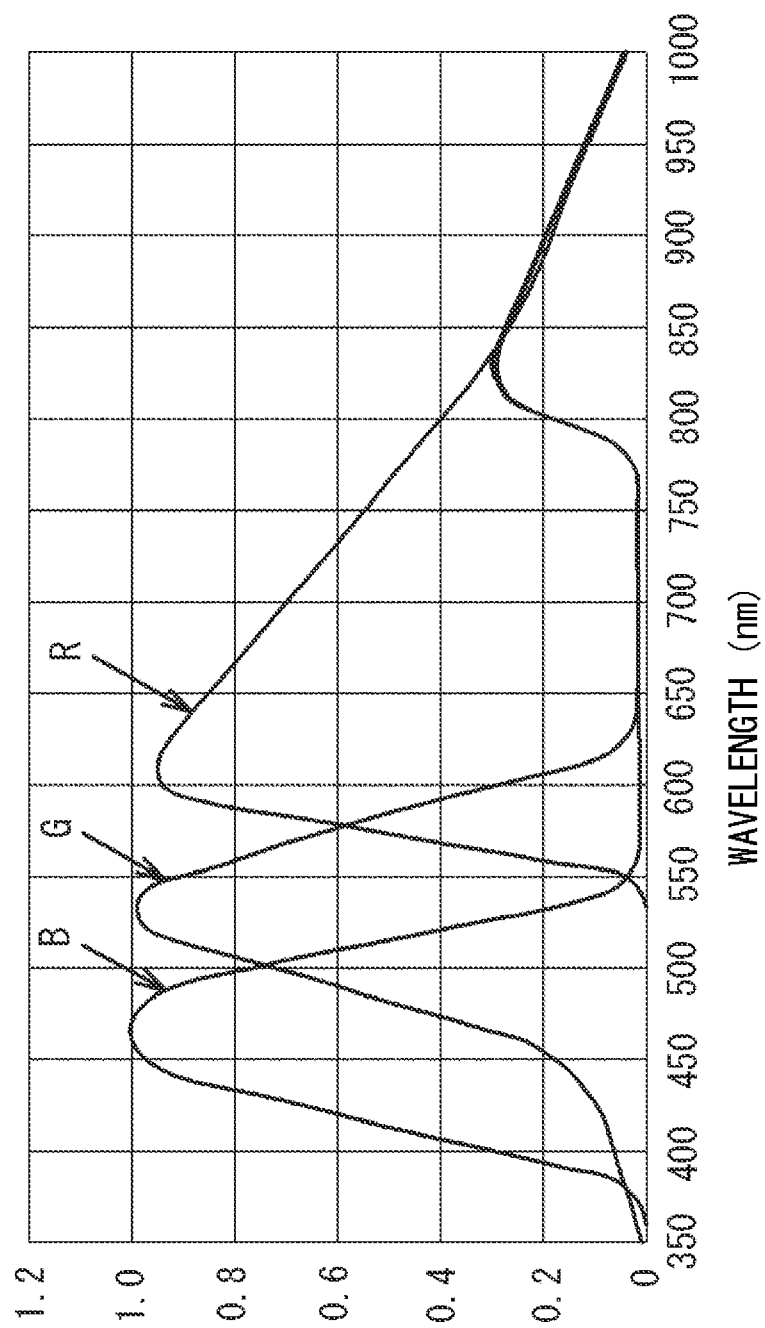


FIG. 6B

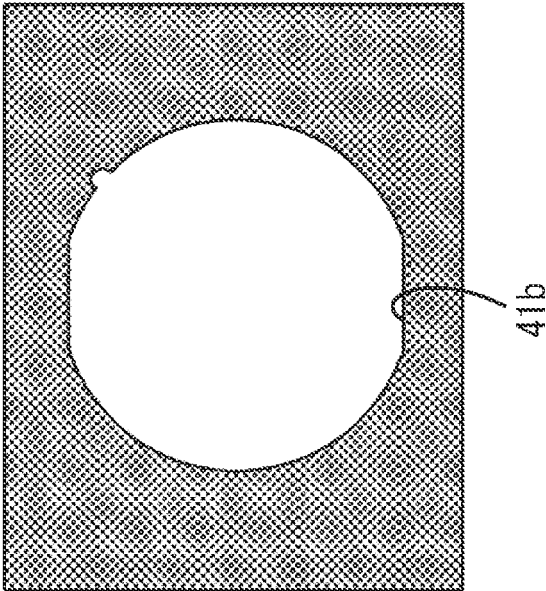
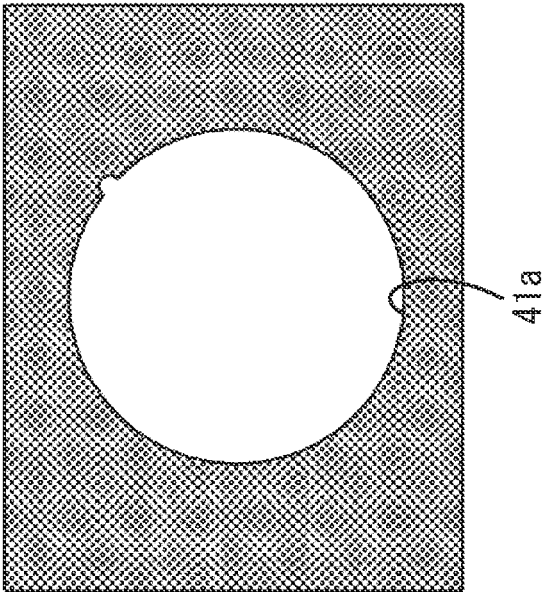


FIG. 6A





EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 09 15 8077

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
A	US 2004/008321 A1 (SAIGUSA AKIO [JP] ET AL) 15 January 2004 (2004-01-15) * paragraphs [0013] - [0015] * * paragraphs [0021] - [0024] * * figure 1 *	1-11	INV. A61B3/12 A61B3/14
A	US 2002/113939 A1 (KITAMURA TAKESHI [JP]) 22 August 2002 (2002-08-22) * paragraphs [0010] - [0041] * * paragraphs [0072] - [0078] * * figure 8 *	1-11	
A	US 2004/165872 A1 (NANJO TSUGUO [JP] ET AL) 26 August 2004 (2004-08-26) * paragraphs [0007] - [0009] * * paragraphs [0016] - [0032] * * figures 1-3 *	1-11	
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			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search Berlin		Date of completion of the search 3 July 2009	Examiner Abraham, Volkhard
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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EPO FORM 1503 03 82 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 09 15 8077

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03-07-2009

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